

US Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery (1-10 FA), 3rd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, conduct an engagement and contract signing in Narwhan, Iraq, on 6 December 2007. (Photo courtesy of the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California)

Sphere of Influence Leader Engagements

Given the current operating environment in Iraq and Afghanistan, one key critical to success is partnering and engaging with the local populace. This typically is accomplished through identifying spheres of influence (SOI) across the brigade combat team (BCT) area of operations (AO). These relationships are established from the highest-ranking Soldier in the formation down to the private pulling security at a checkpoint.

Interactions with SOIs encompass routine engagements where relationships are established and maintained, as well as during formal negotiations where there is a problem to solve, requiring a mutually supported agreement. Knowing how to negotiate properly is not an innate skill; it must be learned.

Every month at the National Training Center (NTC), Fort Irwin, California, 300 BCT leaders from the ranks of

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platoon sergeant through BCT commander undergo leader engagement training based on a methodology called principled-negotiation. Though the class once was offered only to commanders and staff, feedback from the field pointed out the need for platoon sergeants and platoon leaders to have this critical skill as well. So, in June 2007, the course was modified to provide training down to the platoon sergeant level.

Negotiation Types. There are two types of negotiations—positional and principled. A positional negotiation is defined as each side taking a position, arguing for it and then making a concession to reach a compromise. A principled negotiation, developed at the Harvard Negotiations Project as an alternative to

positional-based negotiations and used at NTC, is defined as a method of negotiation explicitly designed to produce wise outcomes efficiently and amicably.

In the book *Getting to Yes* by Roger Fisher, *et al*, four basic points describe principled negotiation: separating the people from the problem, focusing on the interests not the positions, generating several possibilities before making a decision and insisting the results are based on an objective standard.¹

The Course. The training is broken into four phases: Phase 1, Classroom; Phase 2, Leader Engagement Situational Training Exercise (STX); Phase 3, Company STX; and Phase 4, Full-Spectrum Operations.

Phase 1. Classroom training is divided further into two sessions. One focuses on company-level leaders, and the other focuses on battalion and BCT commanders and their staffs. Both classes highlight

principled-negotiation methodology but differ in how the preparation process is executed at the battalion and BCT staff level compared to the company level.

Phase 2. Instructors and students from the Defense Language Institute, Monterey, California, serve as role players and interpreters during Phase 2, Leader Engagement STX. STX lanes allow the leaders to implement tools provided during the classroom training and are focused at three different levels: platoon, company and battalion/BCT. Each scenario's complexity level is relative to the responsibility level.

Phase 3. Company STX is the first portion of the NTC rotation. During this phase, companies conduct different types of lanes that require engaging the local populace, and the BCT and battalion commanders begin relief-in-place (RIP) engagements with NTC observer/controllers (O/Cs) playing the role of the outgoing unit. O/Cs give feedback to leaders on their abilities to implement the tenants laid out in the leader engagement training.

Phase 4. Full-Spectrum Operations occurs during the last seven days of the rotation. The BCT commander is the battlespace owner and has to work through several threaded events that are intertwined across the assigned fictitious Iraq or Afghanistan AO. An event that takes place in a battalion AO will have implications that must be addressed in other battalion AOs. This allows the BCT and battalion commanders to understand the importance of a synchronized engagement strategy to mitigate possible second- and third-order effects.

For BCT leaders to implement principle-based negotiation effectively, an engagement preparation methodology similar to the Military Decision-Making Process (MDMP) is used as a tool to prepare. Figure 1 shows the five-step preparation methodology taught at the NTC in relation to the MDMP.

Mission Analysis and Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB). Preparing for an SOI engagement or negotiation is similar to preparing for any other military operation in that a mission analysis and IPB must be conducted. Mission analysis/IPB for an SOI engagement negotiation must focus on the individual or group being engaged, as well as specific cultural intelligence factors that influence the individual, group and region. This process is a critical step because it sets the conditions to progress to the next two steps.

A majority of the information needed for effective mission analysis/IPB should be provided in an existing database that is transferred during the RIP and transfer of authority (TOA) process. This data provides information on previous engagements and/or other information collected.

This database should include the AO's religious and tribal make up, cohesive or divisive issues in the community, former military/regime influences, current threat assessment, civil law enforcement composition and current sewage, water, electricity, academics, trash, medical and schools (SWEAT-MS) assessment to name a few. Any information not provided during the RIP/TOA, especially at company level, should be leveraged through the battalion and brigade staff elements. This step allows the unit to gather the appropriate tools to address the four points of principled negotiation.

Identify an Intended Outcome. It is important to understand that every meeting must have an intended outcome and only one intended outcome—though there may be many subtopics to the meeting. Identifying an intended outcome is initially a joint effort between the principal (person conducting engagement) and the preparation team following the mission analysis/IPB step.

Careful consideration must be given to what the counterpart wants from the engagement to create a “win-win”

situation for both parties—fostering a cooperative environment and good relations during future engagements. An intended outcome has to be identified, the staff has to examine it for suitability and feasibility, and then the principal approves it.

Develop an Intended Outcome Strategy. This step devises the “concept of the operation” and “scheme of maneuver.” Figure 2 (on Page 16) depicts the pre-engagement preparation checklist distributed to rotational leaders at the NTC. Identifying the intended outcome strategy allows the information leveraged during the mission analysis/IPB process to be used to determine how to attack the problem.

Getting to Yes points out, “To invent creative options, then, you will need 1) to separate the act of inventing options from the act of judging them; 2) to broaden the options on the table rather than look for a single answer; 3) to search for mutual gains; and 4) to invent ways of making their decisions easy.” To paraphrase, thinking outside the box is important to give the principal options so he can create a cooperative environment.

One individual cannot think outside the box as effectively as a group. The group should have a facilitator along with key individuals who can bring their ideas from their respective warfighting functions or experiences in the AO. The

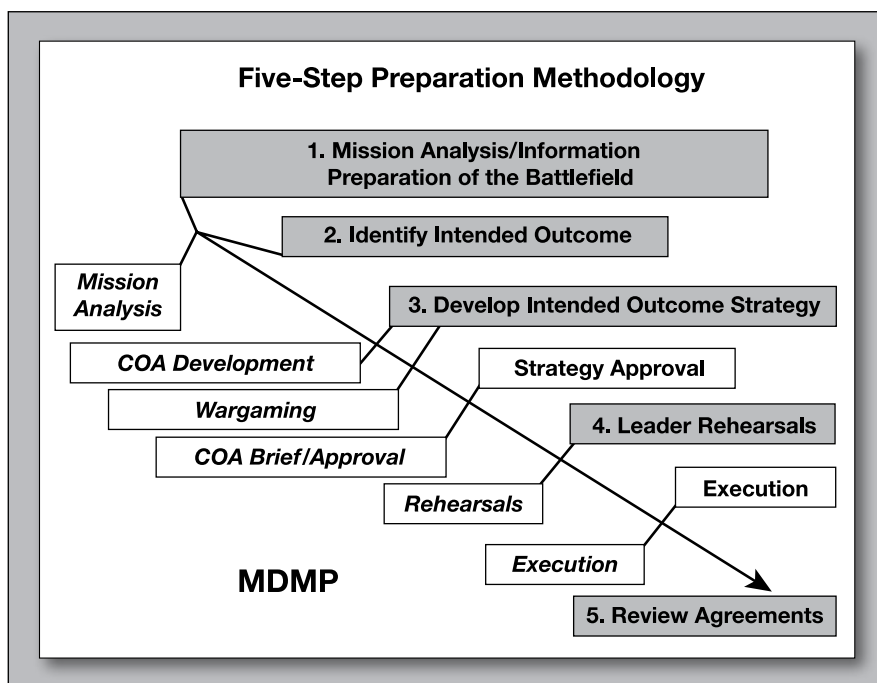


Figure 1: Five-step Preparation Methodology is shown in relation to the Military Decision-Making Process (MDMP).

facilitator should explain the approved intended outcome in detail to give the working group its focus. Every idea is relevant and should be allowed within reason and annotated by a note taker for future presentation, pending a decision on the viability of the ideas.

Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA). After these conditions have been met, the group conducts a focused discussion about both the principal's and the counterpart's predicted BATNA. This will make it easier for the group to identify zones of possible agreements (ZOPA). BATNA is "selecting the best among the alternatives. If you do not reach agreement in the negotiations, which of your realistic alternatives do you now plan to pursue?"²²

A BATNA that is both flexible and realistic gives the principal confidence that there is a feasible alternative to pursue if negotiation fails. An easy way to explain a BATNA is to use the NTC course's scenario of buying a car, because it depicts something familiar to most of us. Once grasped, BATNA principals can be extrapolated to other situations including negotiations between the US

Soldiers (principals) and citizens of Iraq and Afghanistan (counterparts).

Buying a Car Scenario. Before going into a car dealership, most people conduct research, find the vehicle they want and learn what price and features to expect. Then, the buyer (principal) goes to the dealership and finds the vehicle that meets his needs, and the salesman (counterpart) begins to negotiate the price with the principal.

It is important for the buyer to identify his best alternatives before shopping. Arriving at the dealership with an absolute price point in mind and leaving if the price point is not met, no matter what additional features or concessions are offered, is a sign of the principal did not select a flexible and realistic BATNA.

After the principal's and counterpart's BATNAs are determined, ZOPA can be developed to work toward the intended outcome—the principal purchasing a vehicle. In this scenario, possible ZOPAs may be free oil changes for a year, a lower interest rate or a higher trade-in value.

Leader Engagement Training. As leaders engage tribal, civil and religious leaders in Iraq and Afghanistan, the

same principles apply. Many times, higher authorities direct the tasks, such as the Sons of Iraq's need for a combat outpost (COP) in the center of town or increased security for an election or other large event. Although these tasks can be accomplished without buy-in from the local population, the question is "how do leaders get their buy-in and commitment to maximize the effect?" Because these tasks are directed from higher headquarters, identifying the intended outcome in these scenarios may be easy, but without the buy-in from the locals, the negotiation may fail or be very difficult to accomplish.

Election Security. Just as in the car buying scenario, if a Soldier (principal) walks into a meeting with the local leaders about election security with an intended outcome of blocking all major routes into town and restricting all vehicle traffic during a set timeframe, his bottom line and his BATNA are neither flexible nor realistic. This does not allow any recommendations from the local authorities (counterpart) and is counter-productive. A productive intended outcome would be establishing positions manned in part by the counterparts' key leaders to secure the event or engaging key leaders in the area to receive their recommendations and thus, their buy-in. If the principal allows the counterpart to feel as if they helped in providing security for the event, then the negotiation can become a mutually acceptable agreement.

The working group must "think outside the box" to identify methods for the commander to find areas where the two parties can find a mutually supported agreement.

Plan Documentation. With the help of a facilitator, the group selects realistic options, including talking points, to help steer the Soldier or principal past any sticking points or impasse issues and on to the intended outcome.

To better understand the problem, and to ensure that the proposed solutions are available, all planning decisions for the upcoming negotiation must be documented. Documentation can be done on a simple form with space to write the intended outcome strategy and talking points, the counterpart's predicted intended outcome strategy, IO themes, order of events, possible impasse issues and talking points, offers or ZOPA, and the BATNA. It is imperative for credibility purposes that any previous and current promises made and promises kept be documented.

- Assemble the staff (CSS rep, OPS rep, IO, PSYOP, CA, S2, FSO).
- Identify a facilitator to direct the meeting.
- Present the commander's intended outcome to the group.
- Identify counterpart's predicted intended outcome.
- Identify commander's BATNA.
- Identify counterpart's BATNA.
- Develop ZOPA based on an understanding of both BATNAs.
- Address the topics that could cause friction or impasses to an agreement.
- Develop a strategy and talking points to address possible impasse issues.
- Define the relationship-building topics (topics of interest to address as the ice breaker).
- Develop strategy to end the negotiation (viable excuse for having to leave).

Important: Units may need to engage this individual or party in the future; therefore, the counterparts must feel that they walked away with something. This cannot be a win-lose outcome.

Legend:

BATNA = Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement
CA = Civil Affairs (CA)
CSS = Combat Service Support (CSS)
FSO = Fire Support Officer (FSO)
IO = Information Operations (IO)
OPS = Operations (OPS)
PSYOP = Psychological Operations (PSYOP)
ZOPA = Zones of Possible Agreement

Figure 2: Pre-Engagement Preparation Checklist

Leader Rehearsals and Execution.

A leader rehearsal is the time to get all the key players together to step through the negotiation plan. Those attending the rehearsal should include (but is not limited to) the principal, an interpreter, a process observer and a person to role-play the counterpart.

The principal needs a thorough understanding of the approved negotiation strategy. The principal should use this time to rehearse the flow of the conversation and work through possible impasse issues before the actual negotiation.

The interpreter is the key to any engagement or negotiation when a different language is being spoken. The interpreter must be present during a rehearsal to understand the flow and strategy, to identify any unusual or unknown words or phrases and to gain an understanding of the demeanor necessary to convey critical points in the negotiation.

The process observer is a person who has been an integral part of the preparation process, has a complete understanding of all of the counterpart's historical information, an understanding of the negotiations process, and who can "read" the atmospherics of a room. This person accompanies the principal and monitors the feel, nonverbal signs and vocal tones that the principal cannot focus on during the actual negotiations. There should be understanding and trust between the process observer and the principal—so much so that the process observer can signal the principal (by a note or shoulder tap) that the observer can provide some immediate feedback and the principal will stop and accept the feedback immediately.

The person who role-plays the counterpart should be prepared to interject all possible impasse issues to help prepare the principal's intended outcome strategy. The role-player must anticipate how the counterpart will act to give the principal the opportunity to navigate through key areas of the negotiation before the actual engagement.

Upon completing the rehearsal, the principal is prepared to conduct the actual negotiation. Although a well-thought-out plan has been developed, the principal must have the flexibility to change based on the flow and ideas presented in the negotiation. If the counterpart presents an idea that the principal finds mutually acceptable, then he should feel comfortable working toward a solution to the intended outcome.

Review Agreements. Just as with a combat patrol, negotiations or even



1SG Michael Parker, 1-10 FA, conducts an engagement with Sheik Kassam to discuss the Son's of Iraq membership drive in the village of Sadat, Iraq, on 12 November 2007.

(Photo courtesy of 1-10 FA)

routine engagements must have an after-action review or debrief process. In this instance, the process occurs before the engagement is completed by reviewing agreements and issues. Essential elements of the debrief should include promises made between the principal and counterpart, newly discovered interests of the counterpart and topics that may be leveraged or may cause impasse issues in the future.

Once all issues have been captured in a written debrief, the information must be passed to adjacent units and higher headquarters to keep them informed of new developments in the AO. A way to do this is through the operational summary submitted to higher headquarters daily and through theater databases that now are beginning to come online. The summary keeps adjacent units and higher headquarters updated about the AO's actions and provides historical knowledge to units before their arrival in country.

All verbal interactions with the local populace are engagements, and any interaction can escalate to a level where a negotiated agreement must be reached. Both following the five steps in the preparation methodology and placing emphasis on the four points of principled negotiation are critical to success. Leaders should have all the tools in their "kit bags" to be successful during an engagement. Embracing this preparation methodology can ensure success when partnering and engaging with the local populace.

Endnotes:

1. Roger Fisher, William Ury, Bruce Patton, *Getting to Yes* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Books), 1991.
2. *Ibid.*

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